

# FULLERTON HERITAGE

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*The mission of Fullerton Heritage is to foster an appreciation of our city's cultural history and to ensure the preservation of our historic architectural resources and environments.*

## Fullerton's First Park and Its Reluctant Landscape Architect

by Deb Richey

**B**y 1901, the Santa Fe Railway Company had planted a garden at every station depot and section-house along its lines in Arizona and California. Although little evidence of the depot gardens survive, they provided a spot of shade and beauty to weary travelers, tourists, and newcomers to California. The gardens also provided economic benefit for the railroad company as trees planted along the right of ways were later harvested for railroad ties, poles, and posts. Newspaper articles indicate that Fullerton's Santa Fe depot was landscaped around 1895, with colorful ornamental plants and trees replacing the dry, cracked land surrounding the wood-framed Victorian-styled building. Designed for the enjoyment of train travelers, the formally-arranged garden around the depot would be extended into a small parklike area that would function as Fullerton's unofficial first park.

All of the Santa Fe depot oases were designed by one landscape architect: Norwegian immigrant Johannes Reimers (1856-1953), who would be the first landscape architect to work in Fullerton. Although Reimers would work as a landscape archi-

tect until his death, it was not the career of his choice. As a young man, Reimers had attended a German college of forestry and landscaped the parkland surrounding his wealthy family's home in Bergen, Norway. When his father's shipping business collapsed, Reimers was forced to strike out on his own, landing in California in 1881. His fiancé Frederikke (Marie) Arentz traveled from Norway to join him, and they married in Oakland in 1882, setting up house in Stockton. The couple would have six children. Reimers, who had been working as a landscape painter, was hired by the San Joaquin Division of the Santa Fe Railway in the 1890s, where he introduced the idea of improving the depots with ornamental gardens. His depot gardens were very much ahead of the times, containing native and drought-tolerant plants that needed little maintenance. Most of the depot gardens were small, varying in size from 40 by 80 feet to 40 by 160 feet.

Raised in an artistic environment in Norway – famed composer Edvard Grieg was a personal friend – Reimers found his landscape work for the railway unfulfilling, longing instead to be an author. Writing on



*Landscape architect Johannes (John) Reimers, 1900.*

his free Sundays, Reimers was able to publish short stories and a semiautobiographical novel, which were well received, but never provided the income he needed to quit the Santa Fe Company. In a letter to the editors of the *Overland Monthly* in October 1898, he sadly wrote: "You must know how the work in which I am engaged is absolutely

(continued on page 3)

## Fullerton College Initiates Major Project for Historic Building 300

by Terry Galvin

**B**uilding 300, originally known as the Commerce Building when it was constructed in 1935, is now called the Business Building. It and Fullerton College started out together and the building has fared remarkably well during its 84 years. It has survived countless rainstorms, windstorms, and earthquakes, with only 3 broken tiles on its massive roof, which shows no signs of

ever having leaked. The building is the best remaining example of the architecture of the period (designed by noted Architect Harry K. Vaughn) on the campus and one that has provided some of the best examples for details included on newer campus buildings.

Preservation Architect Lucien Runge is currently preparing plans for major improvements to the building, incorporating

restoration, preservation, and modernization methods where appropriate. He considers Building 300 to be not only an historic building, but a heritage building because of its significance with the founding and growth of the campus.

The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Campus Master Plan includes a Cul-

(continued on page 5)

# Advocacy Issues

by Kate Dalton

## National Register and Local Landmark Nominations

The Hunt Library Local Landmark nomination was approved by the Landmarks Commission on October 24, 2018 and by the Fullerton City Council on November 20. Fullerton Heritage's nomination of the entire Hunt property (including the portion owned by Grace Ministries) to the National Register of Historic Places will be considered by the State of California Office of Historic Preservation at its next meeting in early February. We are confident that the nomination will be approved, ensuring added protection for these properties. As of this writing, the City Council has not yet decided on the future use of the Hunt Library.

The Beckman Instruments Administration Building, a Fullerton Local Landmark and National Register listed property, has been purchased by A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, a large electrical contractor previously based in Tustin. This company is reportedly excited about owning this important historic building as its new headquarters and does not plan any significant changes to the building. Fullerton Heritage looks forward to working with the new owners on any preservation issues that arise and to a dedication ceremony finally placing the National Register of Historic Places bronze plaque. Interestingly, although this historic building was initially characterized as an impediment to the successful development of the entire Beckman property, it was the first building in the project to sell. Score one for preservation of historic cultural resources and adaptive reuse and sincere thanks to A. J. Kirkwood & Associates for their support of historic preservation.

## Design Review Committee

The city's Design Review Committee held its last meeting on August 9, 2018 and approved plans to construct a new garage for the property at 512 Jacaranda Place in the Jacaranda/Malvern Preservation Zone. The design of the garage is complimentary to the historic California bungalow residence and is positioned at the rear of the lot.

In August the Planning Commission considered a new process for review of projects previously considered by the Design Review Committee, which the City Council decided to abolish. The Commission reviewed staff's proposed changes to the zoning ordinance that would revise how any new development in Fullerton's residential preservation zones will be reviewed and approved. On October 3rd City Council held a public hearing and approved the proposed changes and new policy. Projects will be reviewed by Community Development staff for compliance to the zoning code and Design Guidelines. Still included in the process will be a written staff report, notification of the proposed project to surrounding property owners, posting of a public hearing notice, and a public hearing at city hall conducted by the Director of Community Develop-

ment. Appeals of projects will be heard by the Planning/Landmarks Commission. Outside professional consultation can be requested by city staff if necessary. Fullerton Heritage will work with owners of proposed projects as well as city staff to assist in appropriate quality development in our historic preservation zones.

## Mills Act Study

At the request of some Planning Commission members, Community Development staff presented a memorandum of Mills Act Program Update at the Commission's meeting on December 12, 2018. Staff has been studying this issue at City Council instruction. This memorandum was a first pass at possible components and procedures for implementing a Mills Act program in Fullerton. More study and development is needed before a final proposal is ready for consideration by City Council, but Fullerton Heritage is pleased that progress is being made.

## Miscellaneous Issues

North Orange County Community College District has still not approved the sale of the vacant properties on the 400 blocks of E. Wilshire and Amerige Avenues, adjacent to the College Park Preservation Zone. The sale has an agreed upon condition that the buyer move the historic houses at 428, 434 and 438 E. Chapman Avenue (that the district also owns) to the vacant lots for restoration. In seeking a waiver from the state to accept a below appraisal previous bid, the state instead decided to have a new bid process that took place on January 8, 2019 and this time leave the final determination up to the NOCCCD board and administration. The developer who submitted the only previous bid was no longer available to rebid, but a new developer has stepped forward with a proposal which is scheduled to be considered at the NOCCCD board meeting on February 12. Fullerton Heritage has discussed the project with the new developer and he appears motivated to build a successful project that meets all of our expectations for preserving two of the historic homes and building two additional units with design that is compatible to the surrounding historic neighborhood in an area much in need of housing.

At the Planning Commission meeting on December 12, the owner of the Gardiner House (Local Landmark #61) located at 1155 W. Orangethorpe Ave. requested a Conditional Use Permit to allow a student housing dormitory for up to 10 students, affiliated with California State University Fullerton. The property is not only historic, but is also zoned R-1 Single Family Residential. Staff recommended approval with nearly 20 conditions including maintaining the important elements of the historic home and landscape, no modifications without Community Development staff review and approval and photo documentation of the entire property. Some of the neighbors were opposed to the project and the Planning Commission denied approval. The owner has the right to appeal the decision to the City Council and has done so; the appeal will be heard

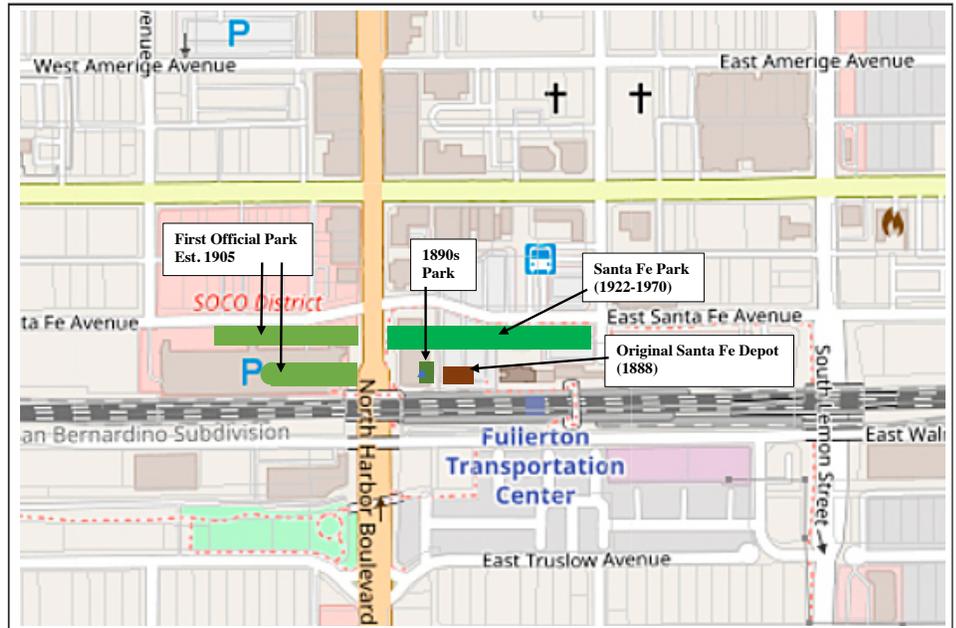
(continued on page 6)

## Reimers

(continued from page 1)

killing to my soul life. I cry from the depth of my heart for deliverance.”

His experience in planting in hot, dry climates led to his appointment as the chief gardener for the City of Fresno, where he designed Roeding Park in 1903 and Hobart Park in 1906. He was later commissioned, in 1910, to design Mooney Grove Park, a naturalist 100-acre valley woodland in Visalia. In 1902, Reimers met fellow author Jack London and provided professional advice to the writer on the landscaping of the grounds of Wake Robin Lodge, London’s Glen Ellen home following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. In 1906, he supervised the planting of fruit trees, vines, and a pyracantha hedge at Jack London’s Wolf House at what is now Jack London Historic State Park. Reimers also wrote one of the earliest reviews of London’s *Call of the Wild* (1903). In 1907, Reimers moved to San Francisco and attended the Institute of Arts, becoming noted more for his landscape paintings than his landscape architecture. Divorced from



*Santa Fe Park Locations in Fullerton. Courtesy of Bob Linnell.*

his wife, he moved to San Leandro after his retirement, living on a meager pension that he supplemented with landscaping projects. His paintings can be found in the Oakland Art Museum and the Art Institute of

Chicago.

After Reimers had moved on to other jobs, the small park adjacent to the Santa Fe depot was not well-maintained, and the Fullerton Chamber of Commerce, formed in 1895, stepped in to provide some needed maintenance, as well as additional plantings and trees. The park, however, was very small, and after Fullerton incorporated on February 15, 1904, residents clamored for a larger city park where inhabitants could gather, especially in the cool of the evenings. At the time, the city had no public land, but reached an agreement with the Santa Fe Railway Company to lease two parcels of land that would become Santa Fe Park, Fullerton’s first official park (see map). The two strips of land were divided by a small dirt road that provided not only access to the park but to the fruit packing plants situated along the Santa Fe railroad line. In exchange for allowing the railway to install large advertising signs, the Santa Fe Company agreed to lease the two parcels to Fullerton for an annual payment of just one dollar. Fullerton’s first mayor, Charles C. Chapman, signed the contract on March 13, 1905. City workers quickly plowed the new parkland and began adding plants



*Santa Fe Park, ca. 1922. Photo courtesy of the Fullerton Public Library.*

(continued on page 4)

## Reimers

(continued from page 3)

and trees. Hitching posts and a water trough for horses were added along the dirt road in July, and by the end of the year, the city's first official municipal park was open to the public.

When Fullerton Union High School, then on Commonwealth Avenue, burned down on March 18, 1910, a movement began to obtain the site for parkland, and a few years later Commonwealth (later Amerige) Park opened as the city's first publicly owned park. In 1914, the first Fullerton Park Commission was established. With Commonwealth Park in place, Fullerton ended its lease on the land that encompassed Santa Fe Park on West Santa Fe Avenue. Over the decades, the former parkland would be used for a variety of purposes and now houses a city-owned parking structure (150 W. Santa Fe Avenue) that services the needs of the train station and the SOCO District.

Many residents had fond memories of the 1905 Santa Fe Park, and after Johann George Seupelt was hired as Fullerton's first park superintendent in 1918, he was instructed to begin plans for a new public park to be situated on the southeast corner of Harbor (then Spadra) Boulevard and Santa Fe Avenue adjacent to the Santa Fe depot on tramped-over land that pedestrians had been using as a shortcut. As with the first Santa Fe Park, city trustees agreed to lease vacant land at a "nominal consideration" from the Santa Fe Railroad Company that would be turned into a city park. By May of 1922, Seupelt had transformed what was described as a "mud hole" into a lushly landscaped park, complete with a drinking fountain, walkways, green lawn, and shade trees. A horseshoe-shaped area on the east side of the park was lined with flowers and comfortable



*Fullerton inhabitants enjoying Santa Fe Park, ca. 1922. Photo courtesy of Fullerton Public Library.*



*Santa Fe Depot with new landscaping, 1896. Photo courtesy of the Fullerton Public Library.*

wooden benches where residents could relax on warm afternoons and evenings. The concrete benches with wooden seating were made to order from a drawing by Seupelt, who had taken his measurements from a comfortable chair. One of the first formally trained landscape architects in the nation, Seupelt took particular care to berm the area to block the sound of trains and the view of boxcars and sidetracks. Seupelt incorporated some of the trees planted earlier by Reimers for the quarter of an acre park, which was also surrounded on three sides by a privet hedge. The only beauty spot in the downtown area, Santa Fe Park was popular with all types of people.

City maintenance workers continued to maintain the park for decades, but by the 1960s, Santa Fe Park started to look shabby, with most of the original land-

scaping long gone. On February 23, 1970, Fullerton City Council members voted to terminate its lease with the Santa Fe Company, and the parkland was turned into parking space.

Additional photographs of Fullerton's first Santa Fe Depot (1888) both before and after landscaping was added can be found in the Local History Room of the Fullerton Public Library, along with the original 1905 Santa Fe Park contract signed by Charles C. Chapman, and Johannes Reimers' 1900 novel, *Unto the Heights of Simplicity*.



*Santa Fe Park, 1960s. Photo courtesy of Fullerton Public Library*

## President's Corner

by Ernie Kelsey

Hello Fullerton Heritage members:

Happy New Year! May 2019 bring you and your families all you wish and desire.

To start the year out right, please make sure you renew your Fullerton Heritage membership so you can continue to enjoy all the membership benefits including our Newsletter and member-only activities. Thank you for your kind, tax-deductible membership donation. Remember you can give a Fullerton Heritage membership as a gift, too. It's an excellent value and people love it! Enrollment materials are included in this mailing and can be found on our website as well.

Since the last newsletter, Fullerton Heritage has been busy on our mission of preserving our historic resources so future generations can enjoy them as much as we have. We've had our annual Goals and Objectives meeting and are staying on track with a focus on the Fullerton College Master Plan, Hunt Library, Baggage Cart restoration and continued advocacy with the City.

We have fielded more than 40 hot line calls, conducted eight walking tours, donated books to the Local History Room and advocated on behalf of over 15 historic properties. All in a day's work! We couldn't do all this great work without members like all of you.

Our Social Media and new website continue to grow. We're seeing much more engagement socially and our new website continues to see more visitors every month. Please follow us on Facebook and Instagram and check out our website at [www.fullertonheritage.org](http://www.fullertonheritage.org). We have a lot of new content and are updating monthly.

Since our presence on our social channels is growing, we're seeing more people come out for our Downtown Walking Tour and Historic Hillcrest Park Tour. Both are great activities that are now seeing more "walkers" and bringing in new members. If you're interested in a tour, check out our Facebook page or give the Hotline a call.

Stay tuned for some fun activities coming your way and get your membership renewals turned in today. Enjoy your new year and thank you for all your support!

See you around town.

—Ernie

### Welcome New Members

David Jerome, James O'Connor, Maura Halpenny, Susan Griffin, Craig Griffin, Renee Davidson, David Smits, Valerie Marino, Taylor Wright, Suzanne Benet, Gaby Brown, Maud Anderson

## Building 300

(continued from Page 1)

tural Resources section that requires projects impacting the campus historic buildings to be designed in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the work to be done, whether it is rehabilitation, preservation, or restoration, and that people working on those projects have certifiable experience with historic projects, including designers and contractors. The architect has that experience and has worked on several campus projects in the past.

The architect asked Fullerton Heritage to become involved with the project because of our reputation in the community regarding historic issues. Four board members agreed to attend a meeting with him and the campus personnel who are overseeing the project. It became clear by the end of the two-hour meeting that there is both a lack of knowledge and interest on the part of the campus staff about the EIR requirements, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, and the historical significance of the 300 Build-

ing. The maintenance staff wants to replace all of the original wood doors and hardware with metal doors to match other buildings, and replace the roof that has only three broken tiles and has never leaked because "it will leak someday". That alone would cost about \$1 million and would cause many more tiles to be damaged in the removal and replacement process.

Those and other issues were discussed at the meeting and in our responses to the minutes of the meeting. The campus staff has never responded to the issues we raised and it has become apparent that they prefer that Fullerton Heritage not be involved in this design and review process. We are interested to know why the project team is apparently not willing to be educated by and follow the advice of the highly trained and respected historic preservation architect hired by Fullerton College. It is obvious that the people currently running the project are not the ones who should be making these decisions that can permanently damage one of the most important historical components of the Fullerton College campus.

We are disappointed with their lack of interest and their lack of experience with a project of this significance to the campus and the community. It is the responsibility of those who are here today to be the stewards of the rare cultural resources that exist so that those who come after can enjoy and learn from them. There is an educational institution. The built environment is part of the institution and belongs to the public and the students. It is the job of those in charge of the facilities to maintain them in their historic context.

They are fortunate to have the funding available for the project and there is only one chance to do the project in the correct way. We are following this process closely and will be exploring other approaches to bring these issues into focus at higher levels within the campus administration if necessary to ensure that this historic building is preserved. We will keep you posted if community involvement becomes necessary to protect this cultural resource already identified in the College Master Plan.

## Fox Update: Grant Moves Forward and Project Receives a Generous Donation

by Tom Dalton

The required forms for the \$2.5 million grant that Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva was successful in securing for the Fox restoration project have been completed and sent to the state for approval. This grant has the same stipulation as the California Cultural and Historical Endowment grants did which requires the Foundation to complete each phase of the work, pay the vendor(s), and then apply for reimbursement from the state.

We were very sad to hear of the passing of D. Richard Odell who was one of the original members of Fullerton Heritage's Project:

Fox, the Genesis of the Fullerton Historic Theatre Foundation. He was a very talented and generous man; so generous that he left \$100,000 to the Foundation in his will. The timing of the gift is uncertain but we are very grateful for everything Richard did to help save the Fox and for his generosity.

Dick Hamm of Pelican Communities is getting closer to finalizing the contracts with the City on the Fox Block parking structure and alley improvements. We look forward to working with Dick and getting this project completed.

### Advocacy

(continued from page 2)

at the February 5, 2019 meeting.

Finally, sadly without review or permits, the new owner of the historic property at 341 W. Whiting removed the original windows, siding and separate front porches and essentially gutted the inside of what was a nearly intact, rare Craftsman bungalow DUPLEX!!! We are devastated to say the least and left wondering why anyone would buy an historic gem and choose to turn it into a modern commonplace structure. This building is in an established preservation zone that has seen slow steady improvement of many of the historic homes in the past few years. This abomination was done

during the holiday break when city hall was closed. Fortunately, one of our board members lives across the street and reported the destruction to code enforcement. We have assurances from Community Development staff that the owner will be required to submit plans and restore the exterior to as close to original condition as possible. We will work closely with staff and the owner to ensure that it indeed happens. We will now be discussing, yet again, new ways to prevent this type of irreparable insult to the historic fabric of our community. If any of our members have suggestions to keep this from happening in the future, please contact us. We clearly need all the help we can get!!

## Member Appreciation Open House Set for Spring

Watch for your personal invitation with RSVP for all members in good standing. Come to eat, drink, talk with your board and fellow Fullerton Heritage members AND tour historic Local Landmark# 52, the Edgar Johnson House on West Brookdale Place.



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